

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS MAG PEDESTRIAN PROGRAM

Who is the Maricopa Association of Governments?

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) is a regional agency of the Valley's communities working together to ensure a better quality of life. MAG is a Council of Governments that serves the metropolitan Phoenix area and the many diverse cities, towns and Indian communities within Maricopa County.



Pedestrian improvements abound in many areas within the Region.

Our agency is charged with developing regional policies and plans in areas such as transportation, air quality, water quality, solid waste and human services. We are also the distributing agency for millions of dollars in federal funds for many important transportation, environmental and human services programs.

MAG is a leader in promoting improvement in the Valley's streetside environments to better accommodate pedestrian travel. Past pedestrian planning efforts conducted by MAG and its member agencies have led to a variety of pedestrian-oriented policies, programs and roadway improvements. In 1993, MAG developed a plan which identified policies to encourage walking, and suggested areas where these policies might be best implemented. In 1994, MAG formed the Pedestrian Working Group to promote increased awareness of walking as an alternative mode of travel and to improve facilities for people who walk. The Working Group consists of representatives of MAG member agencies, and the landscape architecture community.

Why are Pedestrians So Important?

Traffic congestion is a daily feature of the major roadways throughout the MAG region and its impacts on the community are extensive. As the metropolitan area continues to expand and traffic congestion increases, cities and towns are seeking ways to better serve the mobility needs of the region's population, industry and visitors. The region's growth has given a greater appreciation for the way pedestrian facilities help create a sense of community while broadening the transportation choices of the region's residents and visitors. Properly planned pedestrian areas encourage people to walk and socialize, thereby reducing the need for automobile travel. At a minimum, it's very important that people feel that they can walk safely on Valley streets. Beyond that, providing walkways that are user-friendly and attractive that encourage people to walk can reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, and create liveable, sociable communities.

What is the Pedestrian Design Assistance Program?

The MAG Pedestrian Design Assistance Program was initiated in 1995 to encourage the development of designs for pedestrian facilities according to the MAG *Pedestrian Area Policies and Design Guidelines*. The intent of the program was to stimulate integration of pedestrian facilities into the planning and design of all types of infrastructure and development. That intent has become a reality. Eight pedestrian projects have already been initiated with the program, which has leveraged funding for pedestrian facilities. In fact, an investment of \$310,000 in eight projects has leveraged \$1.5 million in federal transportation funds for pedestrian areas, which does not include local or private funds used to construct the designs. Due to the tremendous success of the program, \$375,000 in design assistance will be available over the next three years.



What Are the MAG Pedestrian Area Policies and Design Guidelines?

In 1994, a survey of pedestrian concerns and needs was conducted among residents receiving a Salt River Project (SRP) bill. Almost 500,000 surveys were distributed, and approximately 10,000 responses to the survey were returned. Comments about pedestrian facilities voiced in the survey provided the basis for the development of the 1995 *Pedestrian Area Policies and Design Guidelines*. The document identifies types of pedestrian areas commonly found in the MAG region, and proposes policies and design elements to promote walking. This comprehensive manual of pedestrian policies and facility design creates a regional standard that can be used by community groups, planners and design professionals. The book has been requested by planners nationwide and won the Arizona Planning Association's best ordinance award in 1996.

Providing a sidewalk is only the starting point in considering needs of pedestrians. The *Pedestrian Plan 2000* provides flexible design tools to make all roadways "pedestrian friendly."

What is the MAG Pedestrian Plan 2000?

The purpose of the *Pedestrian Plan 2000* is to identify and recommend programs and actions that guide and encourage the development of pedestrian areas and facilities, and ultimately increase walking as a viable mode of transportation throughout the region. The update incorporates a unique approach: flexible design tools to assist in creating better walking environments within the existing or new roadway network. The plan contains goals addressing areas vital to creating a mode shift away from driving and towards pedestrians, and objectives which are linked to an action plan. An executive summary of the *Pedestrian Plan 2000* can be found on the MAG Web site: www.mag.maricopa.gov. Click on "Technical Committees" and go to the Pedestrian Working Group page.

What is the Walking and Bicycling into the 21st Century Conference Series?



Initiated by the Pedestrian Working Group in 1995, the Walking into the 21st Century Conference Series is attended by planners, engineers, design professionals and pedestrian advocates statewide. These annual seminars increase local awareness about pedestrian facility design and the benefits of walking. In 1996, the Pedestrian Working Group began collaborating with the Arizona Governors Bicycle Task Force and the series was renamed Walking and Bicycling into the 21st Century. In 1997, the Walking into the 21st Century series began a new direction, and each seminar now includes neighborhood representatives and focuses on a specific pedestrian facility design issue, resulting in written recommendations to solve an actual pedestrian facility concern in the region. The recommendations are sent to the neighborhood organization directly affected by the design problem. The 1997 Walking into the 21st Century Conference focused on the Papago Trail near Pueblo Grande. In 1998, a four corner arterial intersection in the City of Phoenix Ahwatukee neighborhood was examined. These recommendations are also on the MAG Web site at www.mag.maricopa.gov. The sixth annual conference, on April 25 and 26, 2000, focused on creating an off-street path system in an urban environment.

How Can I Learn More?

You can learn more about the MAG Pedestrian Program by calling Dawn M. Coomer at (602) 254-6300, or sending e-mail to dcoomer@mag.maricopa.gov. You might also want to visit our Web site at www.mag.maricopa.gov. Click on "Technical Committees", and go to the Pedestrian Working Group page.